



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Avenir Suisse “Think Tank Summit 2020”

The future of transnational security on the European continent

Introductory Keynote

Secretary General Thomas Greminger

17 January 2020

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure to be here with you today.

I am glad that Avenir Suisse has decided to look at the future of transnational security on the European continent through the lense of cyber security. This is a field where the OSCE is well positioned and is playing a particularly relevant role by creating spaces for dialogue and enhancing trust and transparency.

So thank you very much, Director Grünenfelder, for your invitation and for giving me the opportunity to discuss what we are doing in the area of cyber/ICT security, as we call it in the OSCE.

But before delving deeper into this field, I would like to share some thoughts on the challenges that international institutions are facing in Europe, including the OSCE, and how we deal with them.

The OSCE is primarily a multilateral platform for diplomatic dialogue on co-operative security issues. And I would like to stress the importance of the word “multilateral” at the outset, because multilateral institutions, and even multilateralism as a concept, have lately come under considerable fire.

This is of particular relevance to Switzerland. Certainly, smaller or medium-sized countries – not least those in Central or Eastern Europe – have a self-interest in multilateralism. It is not by chance that in the last few years countries like Serbia, Switzerland and Slovakia have chaired the OSCE. And this year Albania is at the helm of the Organization.

For such countries – and for our country – there is safety in numbers. In addition, multilateral settings allow us to play the role of bridge builders, an aspiration at the core of Swiss foreign policy.

So it is natural that the OSCE and its predecessor, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE), have a special place in Switzerland’s foreign policy interests and diplomatic tradition.

On one hand, the OSCE is the only European regional security platform in which Switzerland is a full participating State, since we are not a member of NATO or the EU.

On the other hand, it is no secret that Switzerland, in the 1970s and later on, played a prominent bridge-building role within the group of neutral and non-aligned states and contributed significantly to building trust between the two Cold War blocs.

Unfortunately, the *Zeitgeist* does not appear to favor multilateralism these days.

We seem to be living in times of bilateralism or, even worse, unilateral actions. Transactionalism trumps rule-based approaches.

Some of the world's most prominent leaders now openly display their disregard towards international institutions. And, as a matter of fact, many powerful countries use bilateralism as the way to have the upper hand in negotiations with smaller partners. Be it climate action, disarmament negotiations, or trade talks, the current environment seems to incentivize confrontation.

In this context, the dominant international political philosophy sees the world as a zero-sum game.

But the idea at the core of the OSCE is that the security of one country should not be enhanced at the expense of others. This is what we mean when we talk about indivisible security, a principle deeply embedded at our founding document, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act.

By the way, Switzerland greatly contributed to crafting this document. It is widely recognized that the independent but collaborative character of Swiss foreign policy was particularly helpful to proposing and finding common positions. Even more, Switzerland mediated and presented its own proposals, including one on confidence-building measures. And together with Austria and Sweden, our country took a leading role on human rights issues.

With the passing of time and the return of unilateralism, things turned out to be quite different from what the negotiators of the Helsinki Final Act might have imagined. Unilateral approaches to international relations are not new, but they come with unexpected manifestations in our multilateral forums.

I will illustrate this point with a very clear example. OSCE forums for diplomatic dialogue, such as the Permanent Council, which meets weekly at the Ambassadorial level in Vienna, often become spaces for public diplomacy. While public diplomacy is a legitimate tool to promote foreign policy interests, it becomes a problem when it replaces genuine and meaningful diplomatic dialogue and becomes a key tool for confrontation. So it weakens multilateral institutions from the inside, transforming spaces for meaningful dialogue into battlegrounds for the repetition of well-known positions and mutual accusations, which are often aimed at domestic audiences.

It might be still news to unilateralists, but today we face a complex web of interlinked security challenges that defy borders. Think of terrorism and violent extremism. Cyber threats, of which I will talk more later. Trafficking in drugs, arms and people. Managing large flows of migrants.

Many new opportunities are also of a transnational nature and need common rules and a certain degree of predictability. Think of commerce and finance, areas that became fully global already long ago; increased connectivity; scientific advancements and discoveries; or new technologies like artificial intelligence that offer a wide range of possibilities in fields such as healthcare, education and industry.

In summary, banking on national capabilities alone cannot sustain peace and security. Nor can it bring prosperity and development.

So, ladies and gentlemen, what does the OSCE have to offer as a multilateral setting?

As a platform for dialogue, the OSCE is special thanks to its inclusive membership and consensus-based decision-making.

The countries that participate in the OSCE span the region from Canada to Russia. That means that the OSCE is a good place for European countries to discuss issues of common interest with the United States and Russia, but also with countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus.

In particular, it is a place for Western Europe and Russia to talk: not least to avoid friction in and over countries where the EU's "new neighborhood" overlaps with Russia's "near abroad". An area that is often referred to as 'in-between states' by political analysts.

Decisions are taken exclusively by consensus, which guarantees that all views are taken into account and that everybody has a say. Agreements are difficult to reach, but once they happen, they are solid and indisputable.

One of the OSCE's key goals, if not *the* key goal, is to create or restore trust.

To do so, we take concrete steps to reduce tensions, lower risks and build confidence and stability. This is the objective of a process called the Structured Dialogue, launched in 2016, and designed to create an environment conducive to reinvigorating conventional arms control and confidence and security-building measures in Europe. It does so by encouraging more military-to-military contacts (particularly between Russia and the West), enhancing military predictability, and reducing the risk of accidents and incidents.

State-owned and state-driven, this informal process has stimulated useful exchanges on threat perceptions, force postures and military doctrines. It has also begun to discuss practical steps to reduce military tensions. Avoiding – or at least better managing – military incidents could help prevent an escalation by accident.

Ladies and gentlemen,

When we talk about security, the everyday lives of people are at stake. The lives of families and children, of individuals and communities. The lives of people like you and me. In conflict environments, security is a very concrete thing. It is not just an abstraction, or a nice principle to advocate for in meetings of diplomats in Vienna.

In Europe, in *our* Europe, over 13,000 people have died in the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Millions more have been displaced, lost loved ones and livelihoods.

The OSCE has played a pivotal role since the crisis in and around Ukraine erupted in 2014, when we were the only international organization accepted by all sides for conflict management. We rapidly deployed the Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine and contributed significantly to prevent further escalation of the conflict.

At the political level, the OSCE facilitates efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement to the conflict through the Trilateral Contact Group, where all signatories of the Minsk agreements sit at the same table. Incidentally, Swiss Ambassador Heidi Grau has just been appointed

Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office in Ukraine in the Trilateral Contact Group, a critically important position in our Organization.

Although the situation in eastern Ukraine remains fragile, after more than five years of fighting there is a huge window of opportunity to make progress toward sustainable peace.

For instance, I welcome the promising outcomes of the recent Normandy 4 summit, held on 9 December in Paris, the first one in three years. I believe it took steps in the right direction, including commitment to a full and comprehensive ceasefire, the exchange of detainees, and the identification of new disengagement areas.

Confidence-building measures are important, but obviously not enough. Ultimately, achieving sustainable peace in Donbas depends on the political will of the sides. All sides must make concerted efforts to create an enabling environment for moving conflict resolution forward – that is, implementing the Minsk agreements.

A bridge symbolizes very nicely recent progress achieved. After four years of having to crawl up the steep and dangerous steps of the heavily damaged bridge, since the repairs finalized on 20 November 2019, local residents can now safely cross the line of contact in the Luhansk region. Of course, this positively affects many thousands of people every day.

In conclusion, *dear colleagues*, peace in eastern Ukraine would help rebuild trust in the whole of Europe.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now turn to Cyber/ICT security, which is another key field where the OSCE works to build trust.

Given the attribution challenge with cyber-attacks, there is often little room for co-operation and dialogue. International conflict taking place in cyberspace may lead to retaliation and escalation, including by military means.

The 2019 report by the UN High-Level Panel on Digital Co-operation asked a series of stakeholders about their biggest concern among digital issues. Not surprisingly, cyber conflict ranked first.

So there is a clear necessity for States to resolve a series of difficult issues, including how to promote confidence and responsible state behaviour in cyberspace.

The OSCE has contributed to these efforts by developing 16 practical confidence-building measures, or CBMs, aimed at enhancing interstate transparency, predictability, and stability in order to reduce the risks of misperception, escalation, and conflict.

I believe that our groundbreaking “cyber CBMs” are quickly becoming a core pillar of international cyber diplomacy, especially when we look at the value of preventive diplomacy.

These political commitments aim at building trust among States. They can stop unintended conflicts by slowing down or putting an end to potential escalatory behaviours.

Let me explain in greater detail what these CBMs are about.

The OSCE’s 16 voluntary CBMs can be broadly categorised in three clusters:

- Posturing CBMs, which allow States to “read” each other’s intentions, by sharing government white papers, doctrines and strategies on cyber/ICT security.
- Communication CBMs offer opportunities for timely communication and co-operation. We do so by providing participating States with a dedicated platform for defusing potential tensions.
- Preparedness CBMs promote the further development of national capacities, such as computer emergency response teams (CERTs) and incident response procedures.

The current focus of OSCE participating States is on implementation of these cyber CBMs, while complementing efforts by other relevant fora and stakeholders. At the core of these

efforts is the promotion of effective crisis communication channels, international co-operation, especially at the policy level, and measures to enhance national and regional cyber/ICT security resilience.

These efforts demonstrate how the OSCE can be an incubator for national implementation of the UN Governmental Group of Experts reports. At the same time, we are developing our own innovative ideas on how to address some of the most pertinent international cyber security policy challenges.

Regional organizations like the OSCE tend to have closer relations with national authorities, so they can sometimes better understand their views and concerns. In the OSCE, we established a Network of Cyber Focal Points in our Missions and Field Offices to ensure that we are well informed about national and regional developments. This feeds into our deliberations and negotiations in Vienna, and helps in preparation of our conferences and capacity-building efforts.

Dear Colleagues,

Implementing the OSCE's 16 cyber CBMs remains crucial, particularly in the current political environment. They provide States with means to address non-political and practical issues. They also offer mechanisms that can create and foster routine interactions between States, which in turn can lead to more ambitious goals. Ultimately, they enhance and institutionalize international co-operation on cyber security.

This has a broader implication: OSCE cyber CBMs can help rebuild trust, which is the prerequisite for reducing tensions and preventing conflict. So we look forward to a continued strong Swiss engagement in this field. Several participating States have taken proactive steps on implementing the cyber CBMs. So has Switzerland. Together with Germany, Switzerland is now exploring how it can best contribute to the implementation of CBM 3. This CBM is designed to hold consultations to prevent political or military tension on cyber/ICT security matters – a core component of our work.

This kind of constructive engagement is exactly what the OSCE participating States need and I am glad that Switzerland, together with Germany, is putting efforts into the implementation of this very important CBM. Switzerland has the capacities, expertise, resources and motivations to lead efforts in cyber diplomacy and build bridges between East and West, both within and outside the OSCE setting.

The best way to resolve cyber security challenges is through continued and extensive engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

So I look forward to hearing how all of you are contributing to this effort.

Thank you for your attention.